

Appl. No. 08/994,878  
Preliminary Amendment

Page 2 of 5

**Amendments to the Claims:**

A listing of the entire set of pending claims (including amendments to the claims, if any) is submitted herewith per 37 CFR 1.121. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

**Listing of Claims:**

5. (Currently amended) A method for obtaining and using a private key at user equipment via a network, said method comprising:

transmitting from the user equipment an ID of a user;

receiving ~~a~~ an encrypted private key of the user that is encrypted with a user identifying key associated with the user;

~~interacting with the user at the user equipment to determine the user identifying key;~~  
and

decrypting the encrypted private key using ~~a~~ the user identifying key to obtain a  
decrypted private key, determined from interaction with the user at the user equipment;

using the decrypted private key; and

~~destroying or avoiding making any non-volatile record~~ all copies of the encrypted  
private key and all copies of the decrypted private key at the location of the user.

6. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 5, wherein

interacting with the user includes obtaining a passphrase from the user  
~~the user identifying key determined by interaction with the user at the user equipment~~  
~~is determined from a passphrase entered by the user at the user equipment or biometric~~  
~~information which is obtained from the user by suitable measurement or scanning at the user~~  
equipment.

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Appl. No. 08/994,878  
Preliminary Amendment

Page 3 of 5

7. (Currently amended) A method as claimed in Claim 5, wherein ~~the decrypted private key is used by:~~

using the decrypted private key includes:

computing a hash of a document to manifest the user's approval of the document;

encrypting the hash using the user's private key; and  
transmitting the encrypted hash.

8. (Currently amended) A method as claimed in Claim 6, wherein ~~the decrypted private key is used by:~~

using the decrypted private key includes:

computing a hash of a document to manifest the user's approval of the document;

encrypting the hash using the user's private key; and  
transmitting the encrypted hash.

9. (New) The method of claim 5, wherein

interacting with the user includes obtaining biometric information from the user.

10. (New) The method of claim 9, wherein

using the decrypted private key includes:

computing a hash of a document to manifest the user's approval of the document;

encrypting the hash using the user's private key; and  
transmitting the encrypted hash.